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FROM : USIS BONN

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SUBJECT: Leading Socialist Editor Speaks on Impressions of  
United States at Berlin Amerika Haus

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In response to a request, the Berlin Amerika Haus made its auditorium available to Arno Scholz, chief editor of the influential pro-SPD newspaper Telegraf (circulation 93,200), for a lecture on his impressions of the United States gained during his visit to the United States in 1957 accompanying SPD chairman Erich Ollenhauer.

Scholz addressed a closed meeting of a reading and discussion group (Lesekreis Charlottenburg) with which he is associated. While complying with Scholz' request, in light of his prestige, USIS had some reservations about such a closed meeting taking place in the Amerika Haus and was a bit wary about the views Scholz might express. However, USIS was pleasantly surprised with the outcome of the evening. In his talk, Scholz showed considerable understanding, respect and admiration for most important aspects of American political, social and economic life. The following is a short summary of his main points:

Scholz spent the first five minutes of his talk on what amounted to a "thank you" to the United States for protecting Europe and Berlin since 1945 from Communist attack and domination. He said that one of the things that impressed him most in the United States was that public opinion is really a controlling factor, and not only during elections. He said that recognizing this, he "suddenly" understood why the United States sometimes seems slow in taking action, and now understood that there is a real, meaningful public opinion in the United States which has no counterpart anywhere else in the world. He pointed out that Eisenhower and Dulles must be sensitive to public opinion in the formulation and execution of policy.

Scholz said he gained a very positive impression of automation in the United States. A good deal of pulling and tugging goes on in negotiations between management and labor in regard to automation, he said. But, usually, in the end economic gains from automation are split three ways in roughly equal parts: one third passed on to the consumer in lower prices; one third to various benefits for the workers; and one third to business for profit and further expansion. He said discussions between labor and management impressed him as being conducted on a very reasonable basis and that if this can be achieved in Germany there will be little to fear from automation.

Jay W. Gildner,  
Director,  
Amerika Haus Berlin

USIS Bonn: Reports Office: WTCrocker  
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Scholz said he was particularly impressed by negotiations of all types in the United States. For example, he attended a city council open hearing where the topic of discussion was a proposed dam. The dam would adversely affect some farmers and villagers, would increase business taxes in certain areas but would benefit others through more and cheaper power, etc. He said he was very impressed by the way these people and factions sat down together, talked reasonably and agreed on a course of action to mitigate any adverse effects. He mentioned that he talked to a man whose business would actually be adversely affected by the dam but who, nevertheless, favored the dam because of its value for the whole area.

Scholz was impressed with the activities of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. He said such activities by industry and industrialists for the public good are simply expected by the American people.

He pointed out that the United States is an enormous continent and "there are areas where the race problem simply does not exist." In other areas it is acute. He said that since he had just returned from an extensive trip in Asia, he now "knows that Asia is watching the way the United States handles its race problem," and he is convinced this will be a deciding factor in "the way Asia goes."

Scholz often returned in different ways to the role of public opinion in the United States and stressed that Germany needed a much more active public opinion as expressed through "opinion-expressing" media - radio, television and the press.

He described the hospitality he received everywhere on his visit and the care which all Americans took in answering his questions as fully, fairly and accurately as possible. Scholz concluded his talk by saying that to understand Americans and their country there is no substitute for a visit to the United States.

Medville E. Nordness  
Public Affairs Officer